

I claim:

1. A method for managing subscriber access to online subscription content comprising:
  - (a) providing the subscriber with access to the online subscription service at a first level of service during a subscription period; and
  - (b) after expiration of the subscription period, providing the subscriber with access to the online subscription service at a level of service that is lower than the first level of service without terminating the access.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the level of service is determined by a service parameter selected from download rate, portion of subscription content accessible, access to member-only features, color formatting, sound and combinations thereof.
3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
  - (c) gradually reducing the level of service during the post-expiration period, and
  - (d) notifying the subscriber of the lower service level and of the service parameters to be reduced.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein the step of gradually reducing the level of service includes incrementally reducing the level of service.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein a rate of reducing the level of service is determined by factors comprising a frequency the subscriber accessed the subscription service during the post-expiration period, a frequency with which the subscriber accessed the subscription service during a subscription period, and a period the subscriber had paid for an online subscription.
6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
  - (c) accepting renewal of the subscription; and
  - (d) after renewal of the subscription, providing the subscriber with access to the online subscription service at the first level of service during a renewed subscription period.
7. The method of claim 6, further comprising:

(e) repeating steps (b) through (d).

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

during the post-expiration period, notifying the subscriber that the subscription period has expired.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

notifying the subscriber of terms for subscription renewal during the post-expiration period.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

terminating subscriber access to the online subscription service after a specified post-expiration period.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the subscriber is a potential new subscriber and wherein the subscription period is a trial subscription period.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the level of service is determined by a service parameter selected from download rate, portion of subscription content accessible, access to member-only features, color formatting, sound and combinations thereof.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

(c) gradually reducing the level of service during the post-trial subscription expiration period and

(d) notifying the potential new subscriber of the lower service level and of the service parameters to be reduced.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the step of gradually reducing the level of service includes incrementally reducing the level of service.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the rate of reducing the level of service is determined by factors comprising a frequency the potential new subscriber accessed the trial subscription

during the post-trial subscription expiration period and a frequency the potential new subscriber accessed the trial subscription during a trial subscription period.

16. The method of claim 11, further comprising:

(c) accepting purchase of a new online subscription;

(d) after purchase of the new online subscription, recording the potential new subscriber as a subscriber; and

(e) providing the subscriber with access to the online subscription service at the first level of service during a subscription period.

17. The method of claim 16, further comprising:

(f) repeating steps (b) through (e).

18. The method of claim 11, further comprising:

during the post-trial subscription expiration period, notifying the potential new subscriber that the trial subscription period has expired.

19. The method of claim 11, further comprising:

notifying the potential new subscriber of terms for subscription purchase during the post-trial subscription expiration period.

20. The method of claim 11, further comprising:

terminating potential new subscriber access to the online trial subscription service after the post-trial subscription expiration period.

21. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

maintaining a database of subscriber records, each subscriber record comprising a subscriber identification, a subscription history, and a subscription expiration date;

maintaining a database of non-renewal subscriber records and a post-expiration instruction, each non-renewal subscriber record comprising a non-renewal subscriber identification, a subscription expiration condition, date and frequency of accessing subscription

after the subscription expiration date and a period of time the non-renewal subscriber was a paid subscriber, and

upon passing of the expiration condition, executing the post-expiration instruction for the subscriber.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the post-expiration instruction for the subscriber indicates a service parameter to be reduced, wherein the service parameter is selected from download rate, portion of subscription content accessible, access to member-only features, color formatting, sound and combinations thereof.

23. The method of claim 21, further comprising:

identifying non-renewal subscribers who have not accessed the online subscription over a time period defined in the post-expiration instruction;

notifying the identified non-renewal subscribers with a notification of terms to renew and a hyper-link to the online subscription content;

granting access by the identified non-renewal subscribers to the online subscription service at a reduced level of service

executing the post-expiration instruction during a post-expiration period.

24. The method of claim 11, further comprising:

maintaining a database of potential new subscriber records and a potential new subscriber instruction; wherein the potential new subscriber record comprises an identification of the potential new subscriber, date and frequency of accessing the subscription;

granting access by the identified potential new subscribers to the online subscription; and

executing the potential new subscriber instruction during a potential new subscriber period.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein the potential new subscribers are selected through market research.

26. The method of claim 24, wherein the potential new subscribers are selected through a potential new subscriber accessing a web site for the online subscription.

27. The method of claim 24, wherein the potential new subscriber instruction indicates a service parameter to be reduced, wherein the service parameter is selected from the download rate, portion of content accessible, access to member-only features, color formatting, and combinations thereof.

28. The method of claim 24, further comprising:  
terminating the potential new subscriber's access to the online subscription service after the potential new subscriber period.

29. A system for managing subscriber access to an online service comprising:  
a. a subscription server;  
b. a subscription database; and  
c. a non-renewal database; wherein the non-renewal data base comprises non-renewal subscriber records and a post-expiration instruction, each non-renewal subscriber record comprising a non-renewal subscriber identification, a subscription expiration condition, date and frequency of accessing subscription after the subscription expiration date.

30. The system of claim 27, wherein the post-expiration instruction for the subscriber indicates a service parameter to be reduced, wherein the service parameter is selected from download rate, portion of subscription content accessible, access to member-only features, color formatting, and combinations thereof.

31. The system of claim 27, further comprising a potential new subscriber database, wherein the database comprises potential new subscriber records and a potential new subscriber instruction.

32. The system of claim 27, wherein the potential new subscriber instruction indicates a service parameter to be reduced, wherein the service parameter is selected from download rate, portion of subscription content accessible, access to member-only features, color formatting, and combinations thereof.

33. A computer program product including instructions embodied on a computer readable medium for managing subscriber access to online subscription content, the instructions comprising:

(a) providing instructions for the subscriber with access to the online subscription service at a first level of service during a subscription period; and

(b) after expiration of the subscription period, providing instructions for the subscriber with access to the online subscription service at a level of service that is lower than the first level of service without terminating the access.

34. The computer program product of claim 33, wherein the level of service is determined by a service parameter selected from download rate, portion of subscription content accessible, access to member-only features, color formatting, sound and combinations thereof.

35. The computer program product of claim 34, further comprising:

(c) reducing instructions for gradually reducing the level of service during the post-expiration period, and

(d) notifying instructions for notifying the subscriber of the lower service level and of the service parameters to be reduced.

36. The computer program product of claim 35, wherein the reducing instructions for gradually reducing the level of service includes instructions for incrementally reducing the level of service.

37. The computer program product of claim 36, wherein a rate of reducing the level of service is determined by factors comprising a frequency the subscriber accessed the subscription service during the post-expiration period, a frequency with which the subscriber accessed the subscription service during a subscription period, and a period the subscriber had paid for an online subscription.

38. The computer program product of claim 33, further comprising:
- (c) accepting instructions for accepting renewal of the subscription; and
  - (d) providing instructions for providing the subscriber with access to the online subscription service at the first level of service during a renewed subscription period.
39. The computer program product of claim 38, further comprising:
- (e) repeating steps (b) through (d).
40. The computer program product of claim 33, further comprising:
- notifying instructions for notifying the subscriber during the post-expiration period that the subscription period has expired.
41. The computer program product of claim 33, further comprising:
- terminating instructions for terminating subscriber access to the online subscription service after a specified post-expiration period.
42. The computer program product of claim 33, wherein the subscriber is a potential new subscriber and wherein the subscription period is a trial subscription period.
43. The computer program product of claim 42, wherein the level of service is determined by a service parameter selected from download rate, portion of subscription content accessible, access to member-only features, color formatting, sound and combinations thereof.
44. The computer program product of claim 42, further comprising:
- (c) reducing instructions for gradually reducing the level of service during the post-trial subscription expiration period and
  - (d) notifying instructions for notifying the potential new subscriber of the lower service level and of the service parameters to be reduced.
45. The computer program product of claim 42, further comprising:
- terminating instructions for terminating potential new subscriber access to the online trial subscription service after the post-trial subscription expiration period.

46. The computer program product of claim 33, further comprising:

maintaining instructions for maintaining a database of subscriber records, each subscriber record comprising a subscriber identification, a subscription history, and a subscription expiration date;

maintaining instructions for maintaining a database of non-renewal subscriber records and a post-expiration instruction, each non-renewal subscriber record comprising a non-renewal subscriber identification, a subscription expiration condition, date and frequency of accessing subscription after the subscription expiration date and a period of time the non-renewal subscriber was a paid subscriber, and

executing instructions for executing the post-expiration instruction for the subscriber upon passing of the expiration condition.

47. The computer program product of claim 46, wherein the post-expiration instruction for the subscriber indicates a service parameter to be reduced, wherein the service parameter is selected from download rate, portion of subscription content accessible, access to member-only features, color formatting, sound and combinations thereof.

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